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Cricket today

Lifeline of Cricket

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END OF ROAD FOR BABAR AZAM

VISIT…

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Babar Azam is likely to retain T20 leadership but could lose the post in the other two formats. On the other hand, Sarfaraz Ahmed, who recently made a successful comeback to Pakistan's Test playing XI after four years, could be given charge of the red-ball team. Also, Shan Masood could be named ODI captain, although the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has clarified that he needs to improve his batting. It doesn't end there; Shan was recently named vice-captain for the three-match ODI series against New Zealand. According to reports, Babar and some of the team's senior players are unhappy with the decision. Some reports quoted sources claiming that Babar was not consulted regarding Shan's appointment, but the opinion of Mickey Arthur, who has not even been appointed as a coach yet, was sought. Arthur believes that Shan could be a good future captain for Pakistan. However, in a bizarre turn of events, it has now been revealed that Arthur has turned down the offer to become the new head coach of the Pakistan men's team. Team India skipper Rohit Sharma tried to do some damage control at the pre-series press conference against Sri Lanka, explaining that Bumrah had been working hard at the NCA and got back to full fitness. But a few days before, the Sri Lanka ODIs felt stiffness in his back. Hence, the decision was taken to pull him out of a series. While one can understand that Bumrah is hugely significant to Indian cricket, the lack of clarity over the entire situation is visible. Either a player is fit or unfit. And if he is fully fit and experiences pain within a couple of days again, questions are bound to be asked about his rehabilitation procedure. As per some media reports, Bumrah is set to miss the white ball series against New Zealand and most of the Border-Gavaskar Test series against Australia, as he will need at least another month of rehabilitation for stiffness. There has yet to be an official word about it, further adding to the already existing confusion. Cricket fans ought to know the status of their players and BCCI and the team management would do well to put together a more robust system in place. With no official word over Bumrah's return and recovery, the media seems to be playing a guessing game. Although Team India beat Sri Lanka 2-1 in the threematch T20I series, Pandya's captaincy wasn't all that impressive. There were a number of areas in which he will have to make significant improvements as he gains knowledge and experience in the role. Enjoy the action-packed edition of Cricket Today...

Babar Azam is likely to retain T20 leadership but could lose the post in the other two formats.

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WHAT'S HOT & NOT

GLENN PHILLIPS

Glenn Phillips smoked an unbeaten 63 runs from 42 balls to seize a thrilling two-wicket win over Pakistan in the series-deciding one-day international for New Zealand. Phillips counterattacked after a collapse in the batting department.

FAKHAR ZAMAN

Fakhar adjusted well on the slow pitch and raised his 100 off 120 balls with 10 fours and a six. Fakhar and Rizwan combined in a 154-run third-wicket stand after vice-captain Shan Masood, playing his first game of the series, was out for zero.

KL RAHUL

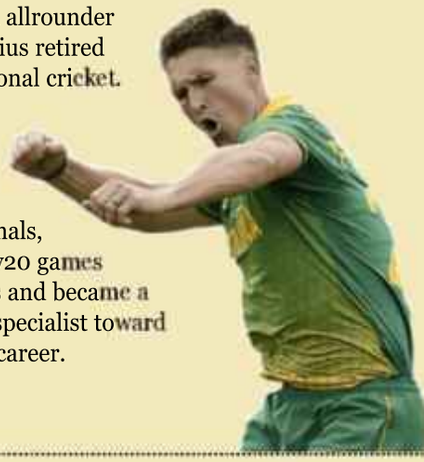
Lokesh Rahul led India with an unbeaten 64 after facing 103 balls. Kuldeep Yadav hit the winning boundary in the 44th over to give India 219-6 in reply to Sri Lanka's 215 all out. India has an unassailable 2-0 lead, with the last ODI scheduled for Sunday.

MITCHELL STARC

Mitchell Starc will miss the first test in Nagpur on Feb. 9 with a finger injury and will join the squad later, while allrounder Cameron Green will tour from the outset with his broken finger. Australia could make further changes to the team.

DWAINE PRETORIUS

South Africa allrounder Dwaine Pretorius retired from international cricket. The 33-year-old Pretorius played three tests, 27 one-day internationals, and 30 Twenty20 games for the Proteas and became a limited-overs specialist toward the end of his career.



INDIA'S TOP ORDER

India made a horrible start to the chase when Sri Lanka's pacers exploited the dewy requirements in the second ODI. Rohit Sharma was caught behind for 17. Shubman Gill was out for 21 to Lahiru Kumara, who also bowled Virat Kohli for 4.

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Cricket Buzz

"I wasn't out, could've made 400"

- Prithvi Shaw rues about missing historic landmark

RETIREMENT PLANS OF WARNER

Cricket Australia trended on social media platforms for their decision to pull out from the bilateral series against Afghanistan due to the Taliban's ban on women's higher education. Besides this, David Warner's return to Big Bash League after nine years is another moment for Cricket Australia to hogg the headlines. Ahead of his Big Bash return, Warner spoke to Sky Sports, where he revealed his retirement date. Warner said that 2023 could be his last year in international cricket. The 36-year-old pointed out that his goal is to finish his career after the 2024 T20 World Cup in America.

"He's upped his game massively in the recent past"

- Hardik Pandya lauds Axar Patel

RASHID KHAN TO BOYCOTT BBL

Australia have cancelled the upcoming three-match ODI series against Afghanistan. Cricket Australia decided after the Taliban stopped women's education in the country. The apex body of Australian cricket also informed the government about its call. Aaron Finch-led team was supposed to play three one-day internationals in the UAE. Rashid Khan, one of the superstars in international cricket, took to Twitter to express his feelings."If playing vs Afghanistan is so uncomfortable for Australia that I wouldn't make anyone uncomfortable with my presence in the BBL. Therefore, I will be considering my future in the competition," he wrote on Twitter.

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KING TO PLAY 200 TEST MATCHES

Virat Kohli's childhood coach Rajkumar Sharma has stated that Virat Kohli will play 200 Test matches. He feels if the India national cricket team plays 15 red-ball games per year over the next six years, the 34-year-old can touch the landmark. "India will have to play 15 Test matches a year. Kohli will have to play for another six years, which I feel won't be difficult for him. The way he is playing and the hunger he has for runs, I believe he will play for many more years," he said.

SACHIN vs VIRAT - WHO IS THE BEST?

Former India captain and BCCI president Sourav Ganguly gave his verdict on Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli's comparison. He also heaped massive praise on the 34-year-old for scoring his 45th ODI ton in the first game of a three-match series against Sri Lanka. Ganguly said it is difficult to pick a better batter between the two. "It is a difficult question, as Sachin and Virat have done well. Kohli is a special player, but there will be times when he will fail," said Ganguly.

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SHIT RECORD IN ASIA

Former India player Gautam Gambhir compared Ricky Ponting and Rohit Sharma. He feels Rohit is a bigger player because of Ponting's shit record in the sub-continent. "Rohit Sharma is a better player than Ricky Ponting because of Ponting's shit record in the sub-continent," he said. Rohit has 29 centuries and 9537 runs at an average close to 49 in 237 ODI matches. On the other hand, Ponting hit 30 centuries and accumulated 13704 runs in 375 games at an average of 42. Punter averages 41 in ODIs played in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. However, he has scored just 6 centuries in the sub-continent.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF HARDIK PANDYA AS TEAM INDIA CAPTAIN: A MIXED START

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He had earlier captained Team India during the T20I series in Ireland as well as in the T20Is when India visited New Zealand late last year. However, the Sri Lanka series was significant in the sense that there have been reports floating around about Pandya being set to take over as white-ball captain...

BY RENIN WILBEN

Team India all-rounder Hardik Pandya recently led the Men in Blue to a 2-1 T20I series win over Sri Lanka at home. This wasn't the Baroda cricketer's maiden assignment as a leader. He had earlier captained Team India during the T20I series in Ireland as well as in the T20Is when India visited New Zealand late last year. However, the Sri Lanka series was significant in the sense that there have been reports floating around about Pandya being set to take over as white-ball captain. Some have claimed that he could soon be captain across both formats, while others have said that he might be made full-time T20I skipper. However, after BCCI's review meeting, a third angle emerged, with sources stating that the cricket board was happy with Rohit's leadership. Irrespective of what transpired in the review meeting, it is likely that Pandya will take over from Rohit as a leader in the near future. The latter is now 35, and India must look to the future for the next captain, who can lead the team for a sizeable time, especially in white-ball cricket. All hints point towards Pandya as being that man.

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RELUCTANT LEADER?

Although Team India beat Sri Lanka 2-1 in the three-match T20I series, Pandya's captaincy wasn't all that impressive. There were a number of areas in which he will have to make significant improvements as he gains knowledge and experience in the role. One aspect that stood out strikingly not once but twice during the T20I series was Pandya's reluctance to shoulder the responsibility with the ball regarding crunch situations. In the first T20I, India had only 13 runs to defend. Pandya had overs left. However, the skipper gave the last over to left-arm spinner Axar Patel, which was a massive risk. India were lucky to get away with it as Axar gave away less than 13 runs, despite conceding a six. Pandya could have been given the benefit of the doubt, considering he had picked up cramps earlier in the innings. However, at the post-match conference, he said he wanted to put the team in difficult situations because it would help them in big games. The logic didn't make much sense since you wouldn't want a spinner to bowl the 20th over. Even in the second T20I, he gave the last over to a rookie in Shivam Mavi, who is not known for his death overs bowling. Mavi went for plenty, even as Pandya himself had two overs left. These are still very early days in the all-rounder's career as a captain. And it would be unfair to point

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fingers at him. He can learn and get better with experience. But from what little has been on the show thus far, he does have a long way to go as international captain. Pandya did excel as Gujarat Titans (GT) captain in his maiden IPL season. However, leading the country is a different cup of tea.

THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

He might not have a lot of captaincy experience. But one positive aspect of Pandya's leadership so far has been his open backing of players. At the press conference ahead of the T20I series, he made it clear that no matter what happens, he would side with his players and give them confidence and the belief that they are the best players in the country. It is the correct thought and left-arm spinner Axar even corroborated his statement. After winning the Player of the Series in the T20Is against Sri Lanka, he commented, "The captain gave me a lot of confidence in the dugout. He tells me to play freely and that he is there to protect me." It is of utmost importance for players to get that security and assurance from the captain. In that vein, Pandya has made the right start. But the real challenge for him will come when the team underperforms. The actual value of Pandya, the leader, will come to the fore during tough times. Indian cricket will wait and watch.■

FLOP T20I XI OF 2022

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South Africa's T20I captain, Temba Bavuma, was at the centre of criticism for most of 2022, particularly in the T20I World Cup, for his underwhelming contribution to the Proteas at the start. The 32-yearold looked like a rookie in a professional set-up as he amassed just 134 runs in 12 matches...

BY RENIN WILBEN

With the historic IPL media rights sale, the memorable Asia Cup, the emergence of new T20 leagues, and the T20 World Cup, the focus was on the shortest format of the game. The year witnessed the emergence of new faces of T20I cricket, such as Suryakumar Yadav, Sam Curran, and Sikandar Raza. Meanwhile, Mohammad Rizwan and Babar Azam carried their form from the previous year. However, the passing year has been sad, forgettable, and frustrating for several big stars who would love to erase 2022 from their career. This article will focus on the flop XI of 2022.

1. TEMBA BAVUMA

South Africa's T20I captain, Temba Bavuma, was at the centre of criticism for most of 2022, particularly in the T20I World Cup, for his underwhelming contribution to the Proteas at the start. The 32-year-old looked like a rookie in a professional set-up as he amassed just 134 runs in 12 matches, averaging 13.40. There were demands for his ouster during the World Cup, as many accused him of taking up the spot of in-form Reeza Hendricks. Bavuma had a big hand in South Africa's early exit from the premier T20I competition.

2. KL RAHUL

KL Rahul is another opener whom the critics barely gave breathing space. Rahul had a fantastic IPL but looked like a pale version of himself in international cricket as he scored 434 runs in 16 matches, at an average of 28.93. The numbers fail to reveal that Rahul was disappointed on occasions when he was required to perform the most. In the Asia Cup, Rahul scored just one fifty-plus score and gathered 132 runs. While in the T20 World Cup, he scored big, a bit late in the

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competition and amassed just 128 runs in six matches.

3. NICHOLAS POORAN

Lucknow Super Giants bought Pooran for a whopping 16 crores at the IPL, making him the most expensive Caribbean player in the tournament's history. However, his stats contradict his purchase value, and even the fans and experts nod at this. Pooran played 23 matches in 2022 and gathered 582 runs. However, he failed to lead his side to the group stage of the T20 World Cup, which was a shock for everyone. As a result, Pooran quit as the captain of the Windies team.

4. MOHAMMAD NABI

The former Afghanistan captain was miserable with the bat and the ball this year as he averaged just 11.64, his worst since 2010, his debut year. In 2022, Nabi played 18 games, scored 163 runs, and had zero fifty-plus scores under his belly. With the ball, Nabi picked up just 11 wickets in 18 matches. The 37-year-old remained unsold at the auction and admitted that he deserved to go unsold since he was not up to the mark this year.

5. JIMMY NEESHAM

New Zealand were among the best teams in the T20 World Cup, excluding the crucial semi-final game against Pakistan, where they suffered a humiliating loss. Besides that, every Kiwi player contributed to one match or the other. Neesham had the least contribution, and he even went unsold in the recently concluded auction. The 32-year-old weakened the New Zealand middle order as he amassed just 272 runs in 22 matches this year. The 32-year-old registered his worst average (22.66) in the last five years.

6. DINESH KARTHIK

Karthik scripted one of the best stories of his career this year as he made a remarkable comeback to the

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side after a stellar IPL. Karthik donned the new role of a finisher with RCB and was touted to do the same with India, but the 37-year-old failed to replicate the same. Karthik played 28 matches and gathered just 287 runs with 13 sixes under his belt, which is underwhelming for a finisher. Further, he got selected ahead of Rishabh Pant in the World Cup but failed to make a mark, which made people wonder whether his selection was out of a fluke performance in the IPL.

7. RAVICHANDRAN ASHWIN

Like in 2021, Ashwin found his way to the T20 World Cup without much participation in the bilateral series. Besides the match-winning runs against Pakistan, Ashwin failed to provide any strength to the Men in Blue with the ball and was a soft target for the opponents. The 36-year-old played 14 matches, took 11 wickets, and averaged 34, which is among the worst by a spinner this year. As a result, the RR star was dropped from the bilateral series against New Zealand and is also not a part of the upcoming Sri Lanka tour.

8. MITCHELL STARC

Among the seamers, Australia's Mitchell Starc has been disappointing, and his poor form is also one of the big reasons why Australia failed to make it to the semis in the World Cup. In 13 matches this year, Starc has picked up just ten wickets, which is embarrassing looking at his past performances. Starc averaged 24. Another big worry for Australia and Starc is that he heavily leaked runs this year. Besides failing to pick up wickets, Starc has not been economical. He leaked runs

at a rate of 8.21.

9. KAGISO RABADA

South Africa had an early exit in the T20 World Cup but were the table toppers for a good time, all thanks to their bowlers. Anrich Nortje, Lungi Ngidi, and Wayne Parnell were excellent for the Proteas, but one disappointment for the Temba Bavuma-led side was Kagiso Rabada. The 27-year-old is a class bowler and has proved it on several occasions, but this year, he scalped 13 wickets in seven matches and failed in the World Cup.

10. AVESH KHAN

With Jasprit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja out of the action for most of the year, the pressure was on youngsters like Avesh Khan to provide stability to the Indian side. However, Avesh failed to perform and got heavily trolled for his inability to pick wickets and leak runs. Avesh was a part of the Asia Cup and took part in bilateral series. This year, Khan scalped 13 wickets. The biggest concern was his economy which was 9.10. As a result, Avesh was replaced during the Asia Cup and did not find a place in the T20 World Cup squad.

11. HARSHAL PATEL

Another Indian seamer who found his way out of the team before the T20 World Cup was Harshal Patel. Patel was considered one of the premier bowlers going into the T20 World Cup, but his poor bowling resulted in him sitting on the bench in Australia during the premier tournament. Patel played 22 matches and picked up 23 wickets at an economy of 9.30. ■

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WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MESS IN INDIAN CRICKET?

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Not just Bumrah, there is no proper update on allrounder Ravindra Jadeja's rehabilitation status. The cricketer has been out of action after suffering a freak knee injury during the Asia Cup in the UAE...

BY RENIN WILBEN

The calendar may have changed from 2022 to 2023, but some things in Indian cricket remain the same. The confusion over the fitness status of lead pacer Jasprit Bumrah existed for the second half of last year, and the situation remained the same at the start of 2023 as well. Last year, he also made a comeback during the home series against Australia but was ruled out again after a couple of games. As a result, he eventually missed out on India's T20 World Cup campaign. After initially not being picked in the Indian squad for the one-day series against Sri Lanka at home, he was added to the squad as a last-minute replacement. And then, on the eve of the one-day series, it was announced that Bumrah had been ruled out as a precautionary measure. The entire situation surrounding the Indian fast bowler's status has greatly embarrassed Indian cricket. The team management and selectors are desperate to get Bumrah back, but the bowler is not yet ready for the hard grind. So what else can explain his selection then being ruled out not once but twice?

LACK OF CLARITY HURTING INDIAN CRICKET'S IMAGE

Team India skipper Rohit Sharma tried to do some damage control at the pre-series press conference against Sri Lanka, explaining that Bumrah had been working hard at the NCA and got back to full fitness. But a few days before, the Sri Lanka ODIs felt stiffness in his back. Hence, the decision was taken to pull him out of a series. While one can understand that Bumrah is hugely significant to Indian cricket, the lack of clarity

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over the entire situation is visible. Either a player is fit or unfit. And if he is fully fit and experiences pain within a couple of days again, questions are bound to be asked about his rehabilitation procedure.

As per some media reports, Bumrah is set to miss the white ball series against New Zealand and most of the Border-Gavaskar Test series against Australia, as he will need at least another month of rehabilitation for stiffness. There has yet to be an official word about it, further adding to the already existing confusion.

Cricket fans ought to know the status of their players and BCCI and the team management would do well to put together a more robust system in place. With no official word over Bumrah's return and recovery, the media seems to be playing a guessing game.

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH RAVINDRA JADEJA?

Not just Bumrah, there is no proper update on all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja's rehabilitation status. The cricketer has been out of action after suffering a freak knee injury during the Asia Cup in the UAE last year.

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He underwent knee surgery, missed the entire T20 World Cup campaign and remains on the sidelines. Similar to the Bumrah situation, Jadeja was initially selected for the Bangladesh tour and subsequently ruled out. This seems to be becoming a bit of a trend in Indian cricket. According to some media reports, Jadeja has returned to National Cricket Academy for a fitness test. After that, he will undergo the mandatory Yo-Yo and DEXA tests. And, if he is deemed fit, he could return for the ODI series against New Zealand at home. But, again, there has been little communication over Jadeja since he was out due to an injury. It is understandable if the board doesn't want to rush players back into the game. Both Bumrah and Jadeja are key members of the team. But the problem remains over the lack of transparency in dispensing out information.

All this brings us to the big question – who exactly is calling the shots in Indian cricket? Is it BCCI chief Roger Binny, head coach Rahul Dravid or skipper Rohit Sharma? That is another confusing situation in itself! ■

FIVE BEST BOWLING FIGURES BY INDIAN BOWLERS ON T20I DEBUT

Axar Patel made his T20I debut against Zimbabwe on July 17, 2015. The 28-year-old took a three-wicket haul in that match and completed his quota of overs with figures of 3/17 in four overs...

BY ABHINAV TYAGI

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The Men in Blue started the New Year on a high, as the Hardik Pandya-led side emerged victorious in a closely-fought T20I series against Sri Lanka. While India won the first ODI by two runs, the visitors hit back in the second, clinching it by 16 runs. The hosts were clinical in the final game, with Suryakumar Yadav scoring an unbeaten 112 off 51 balls. Hardik Pandya-led team accumulated 228/5 and bowled out Lanka on a score of 137. Meanwhile, Shivam Mavi was the star of the opening game as he took 4 wickets on his debut. This article will shed light on the five best bowling figures by an Indian on their T20I debut.

5. AXAR PATEL: **Axar Patel** made his T20I debut against Zimbabwe on July 17, 2015. The 28-year-old took a three-wicket haul in that match and completed his quota of overs with figures of 3/17 in four overs. Axar dismissed Hamilton Masakadza, Sikandar Raza, and skipper Elton Chigumbura. Patel won the player of the match award for his performance. In that game, India scored 178 in twenty overs, and with the help of Axar's magic, Ajinkya Rahane-led side restricted Zimbabwe to 124/7. Since his debut, Axar has played 38 T20Is and taken 34 wickets. His debut figure is his best performance to date.

4. BHUVNESHWAR KUMAR: **India's star** bowler, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, made his debut against arch-rivals Pakistan on Christmas 2012. In that match, Bhuvi picked up a three-wicket haul and gave away just nine runs. Bhuvi scalped wickets of Nasir Jamshed, Ahmed Shehzad, and Umar Akmal. Despite Bhuvi's magical spell, Pakistan emerged victorious and won the match by five wickets. In 11 years of his T20I career, Kumar has taken 90 wickets in 87 matches and is India's leading wicket-taker in T20Is.

3. SHIVAM MAVI: **2018 U-19** World Cup winner Shivam Mavi, who debuted against Sri Lanka, is 3rd on the list, with a figure of 4/22 in his four overs. Mavi, who helped India win the game by two runs, picked up the wickets of Pathum Nissanka, Dhananjaya de Silva, Wanindu Hasaranga, and Maheesh Theekshana. Although, Mavi did not win the player of the match award for his performance. IPL defending champions Gujarat Titans recently bought Shivam Mavi for six crores in the auction for the upcoming IPL edition.

2. PRAGYAN OJHA: **Former India** left-arm spinner Pragyan Ojha ranks second on the list for his four-wicket haul in his debut match against Bangladesh in 2009. Ojha registered a spell of 4/21 in four overs. Ojha won the player of the match award for his display as he dismissed Junaid Siddique, Shakib Al Hasan, Mahmudullah, and Mashrafe Murtaza. Courtesy of Ojha, India won the match comfortably by 25 runs. From then, Ojha just featured in six T20Is for India and has taken ten wickets.

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1. BARINDER SRAN: **The best figure** on a T20I debut by an Indian is Barinder Sran. The 30-year-old made his debut against Zimbabwe on June 20, 2016, where he picked up a four-wicket haul by giving away just ten runs. Sran was the player of the match as he set the platform for India to win the game comfortably by ten wickets. He took the wickets of Chamu Chibhabha, Hamilton Masakadza, Sikandar Raza, and Tinotenda Mutombodzi. Unfortunately, Brar played just two matches for India. He has six wickets to his name.

IS BABAR AZAM GOING THE VIRAT KOHLI WAY?

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The situation developing with Babar in Pakistan is very similar to what happened with Virat Kohli in India. Amid his poor form and some disappointing results, questions were being raised about his captaincy across the three formats of the game...

BY RENIN WILBEN

As per some news reports emerging from Pakistan, the team's captaincy arrangement is set to undergo a major overhaul. Going forward, the team could have three separate captains for each game's format. Apparently, Babar Azam is likely to retain T20 leadership but could lose the post in the other two formats. On the other hand, Sarfaraz Ahmed, who recently made a successful comeback to Pakistan's Test playing XI after four years, could be given charge of the red-ball team. Also, Shan Masood could be named ODI captain, although the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has clarified that he needs to improve his batting. It doesn't end there; Shan was recently named vice-captain for the three-match ODI series against New Zealand. According to reports, Babar and some of the team's senior players are unhappy with the decision. Some reports quoted sources claiming that Babar was not consulted regarding Shan's appointment, but the opinion of Mickey Arthur, who has not even been appointed as a coach yet, was sought. Arthur believes

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that Shan could be a good future captain for Pakistan. However, in a bizarre turn of events, it has now been revealed that Arthur has turned down the offer to become the new head coach of the Pakistan men's team.

PARALLELS WITH KOHLI?

The situation developing with Babar in Pakistan is very similar to what happened with Virat Kohli in India. Amid his poor form and some disappointing results, questions were being raised about his captaincy across the three formats of the game. He initially quit the T20 leadership to focus on the other two formats. However, rather unceremoniously, the BCCI selection committee sacked him as a one-day leader, explaining that they only wanted one leader across white-ball formats. Subsequently, Kohli quit as Test leader after India's disappointing 1-2 series loss in South Africa despite being 1-0 up. While there was an open tussle between the former BCCI chief Sourav Ganguly and Kohli over the latter's exit, new PCB Chairman Najam Sethi and interim chief selector Shahid Afridi have thrown their weight behind Babar as a leader. After Pakistan's 0-3 drubbing at home against England, Sethi commented, "Babar Azam is the star of Pakistan. Without him, the Pakistan team would be without its son of the soil. He is in our hearts and will always remain there." He recently also said Babar had a free hand to pick the playing XI.

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It sounds great, but it doesn't take a lot to change in Pakistan cricket. We all know about how Ramiz Raja was sacked as PCB chief. Overnight, he launched a tirade against his former employer and the new PCB chief and continues to do so. There have been many instances of captains and coaches being sacked, reinstated and sacked again. Sethi himself is not new to the Pakistan cricket circus, having been PCB chairman before during the tenure of Nawaz Sharif as Pakistan's Prime Minister. You can never predict what will happen in Pakistan cricket, like Indian cricket.

ALL IS NOT WELL BETWEEN SARFARAZ AND BABAR?

Numerous media reports have been about not being well with Rohit Sharma and Kohli over the years. Both have rubbished rumours and are very cordial with each other. Now stories are emerging out of Pakistan cricket over Sarfaraz and Babar. The former was kept out of the Test playing XI for four years but made a tremendous return during the home series against New Zealand after Mohammad Rizwan was dropped. The video of Babar and Imam-ul-Haq's celebrations after Sarfaraz's hundred in the second Test against the Kiwis went viral. However, one of the users criticized Babar, using the picture from that video, claiming he fake-praised the former captain. Shockingly, Sarfaraz liked the tweet but removed it after facing a lot of flak. So it remains to be seen how the tricky Sarfaraz-Babar equation pans out. ■

SOCIAL BUZZ

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instagram

One day cricket will also wear casual clothing for the walk in to matches

Selfie had to be post dinner because there was way too much to talk about

Feeling good

twitter

@IrfanPathan: "Ranji trophy performances should be the first criteria for test selections"

@bhogleharsha: "Very hard on Sarfaraz Khan who has literally broken the door down in first class cricket"

MAGAZINE KING

@MichaelVaughan: "Will the Australians refuse to play Afghanistan in the World Cup this year"

@rashidkhan_19: "Cricket! The only hope for the country.Keep politics out of it."

& TRAVEL LEISURE

Favorite hotel in the world

Emirates Palace in Abu Dhabi is my personal favorite. It is beautiful and humongous in size. The hotel has been built on the design of palaces. It has got its own artificial sea. Pool of this unique place adds more beauty to the well-designed hotel.

USP of the hotel

According to me, each and everything of the hotel comes under the USP column. The interiors are not only eye-catching but are also best in the hotels category. Food is mouthwatering especially non vegetarian.

Favorite destination in the world

Dubai is my favorite destination because of its diversified beauty.

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What is that you like about this place?

I like malls, restaurants, amusement parks and the expansions in new fields.

What do you like to do on holidays?

Spending time with my family and playing different sports are my preferred activities.

Most memorable meal while travelling

I once had a delicious vegetarian food at the road side restaurant while travelling from Chandigarh to Delhi. Mattar Paneer was mouthwatering and I am still looking for that kind of taste.

What is the one thing you always keep before leaving for any destination?

I keep my prayer mat at the first instance while packing my stuff.

"EMIRATES PALACE IN ABU DHABI IS MY PERSONAL FAVORITE"

– IRFAN PATHAN

TRENDING

"I'm very disappointed. I would have loved to be on it"

Adam Zampa on his omission from India tour

VAUGHAN HITS BACK AT AUSTRALIA

The opinions stand divided on Australia's decision to cancel the ODI series against Afghanistan. Cricket Australia has refused to play three ODIs against the sub-continent team in the UAE Arab Emirates. Taliban, who are currently ruling Afghanistan, has banned women from attending colleges in the country. Taking a strong position against the call, Australia decided to call off the games against Afghanistan. Former England player Michael Vaughan has sided with Afghanistan. He first gave his support to Rashid and has now hit back at Australia. "Will the Australians refuse to play Afghanistan in the World Cup this year .. they didn't in the men's T20 World Cup a few months ago !?????" he wrote.

BATTING COACH OF SURYAKUMAR

Yuzvendra Chahal missed the second ODI against Sri Lanka due to injury. However, the spinner was in a good mood during his conversation with Kuldeep Yadav, claiming that he is the batting and bowling coach of Suryakumar Yadav and Kuldeep. After the second game at Eden Gardens, the 32-year-old spoke to Player of the Match Kuldeep on Chahal TV. Kuldeep took three wickets as India defeated the Dasun Shanaka-led team by 4 wickets to clinch the three-match series 2-0. "I am the batting coach of Suryakumar Yadav and now I am your bowling coach. Note this," Chahal told Kuldeep. Kuldeep dismissed Kusal Mendis (34), Dasun Shanaka (2), and Charith Asalanka (15) as the visitors managed 215 in 39.4 overs. In response, India won the game in 43.2 overs, with KL Rahul scoring an unbeaten 64.

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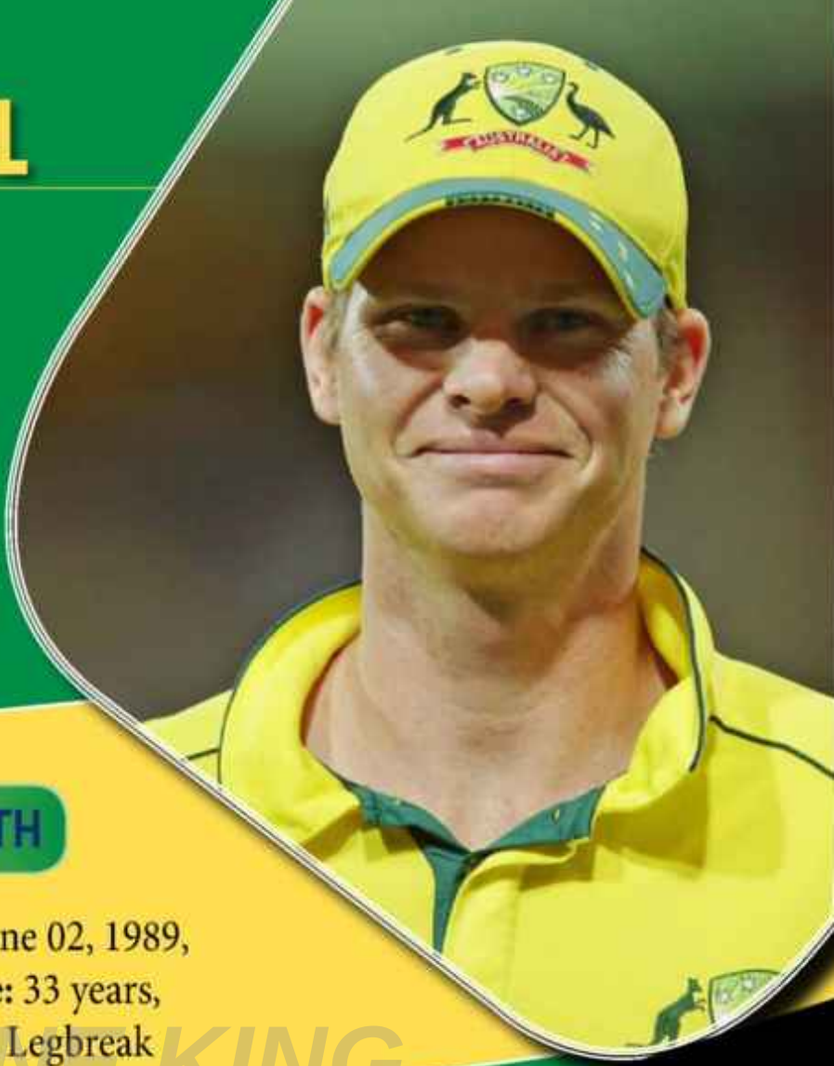
BEWARE OF VIRAT

Former Indian batter Wasim Jaffer feels Virat Kohli starting the year with a hundred is a good sign for the Indian team in the ODI World Cup year. Jaffer believes that the 34-year-old is getting the rewards for his hard work. Speaking to ESPN Cricinfo, Jaffer said he expects Kohli to score centuries for years. "He finished 2022 with a ton and has started 2023 with a hundred. We know Virat Kohli's form is not just for a month or series but several years. India will hope to see Virat in form during the 2023 ODI World Cup. Kohli's form is an excellent sign for the sub-continent nation," he said. "We know his fitness regime and gameplay. It seems all the efforts are now repaying well for the former India captain," he added.

UP, CLOSE & PERSONAL

"I AM FOND OF CHICKEN SCHNITZEL"



— STEVE SMITH

Name: Steven Peter Devereux Smith, **Born:** June 02, 1989, **Place of Birth:** Sydney, New South Wales, **Age:** 33 years, **Batting Style:** Right-hand Bat, **Bowling Style:** Legbreak Googly

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Steve Smith is one of the superstars in international cricket. The former Aussie captain has done exceptionally well across formats and recently scored his 30th Test hundred.

Nickname
Smithy

Like to play against
England

Favorite Shot
Flick

Favorite Bowler
Shane Warne

Favorite Batter
Ricky Ponting

Favorite Tennis Player
Roger Federer

Favorite Restaurant
Clovelly Hotel in Sydney

My Favourites

Favorite Film
Home Alone 2

Favourite Musician
Little Birdy

Favorite Food
Chicken Schnitzel

Favorite TV Show
One Tree Hill

FIND SIX DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THESE TWO PICTURES

CONTEST

Last month's winners: Suresh (Noida), Vishnu (Delhi), Hari Om (Gurugram)

Last month's answers:

In this contest you have to spot six differences between both the pictures. Three lucky winners will get a Parker pen each.

Rules & Regulations for the contest

- **Last date for entries:** Jan 20, 2023.
- A draw will determine the winner.
- Winners name will be announced in the next issue of cricket today.
- The prizes may vary from the one shown.
- Send in your answers along with your name, occupation, address, contact No. and Email ID at our postal address.

Our postal address

Cricket Today: X-30, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-II, New Delhi-110020 Ph: 011 40712100
Fax: 011 41611866

BEST OF THE WEEK

HIGHEST AVERAGE AT HOME IN ODIs (MIN. 3000 RUNS)

59.9 - ROHIT SHARMA*	53.7 - MS DHONI
59.0 - VIRAT KOHLI	53.3 - ROSS TAYLOR
54.7 - HASHIM AMLA	

MOST ODI PARTNERSHIP RUNS FOR INDIA

8227 - SACHIN/GANGULY	4939 - ROHIT/KOHLI*
5193 - ROHIT/DHAWAN	4387 - SACHIN/SEHWAG

MOST ODI RUNS AFTER 20 INNINGS AS INDIAN CAPTAIN

1192 - VIRAT KOHLI*	790 - SACHIN TENDULKAR
975 - SOURAV GANGULY	731 - RAHUL DRAVID
892 - ROHIT SHARMA	

BEST 'MATCHES PER M.O.M.' RATIO IN T20I (MIN 10 AWARDS)

4.5 - SURYAKUMAR YADAV*	7.9 - CHRIS GAYLE
7.3 - MOHD. RIZWAN	8.0 - MOHD. NABI
7.7 - VIRAT KOHLI	

HIGHEST ODI AVERAGE FOR INDIA AT MIDDLE ORDER (MIN 500 RUNS)

51.23 - KL RAHUL*	48.74 - MS DHONI
50.12 - VIRAT KOHLI	42.36 - SHREYAS IYER

MOST CENTURIES AGAINST SRI LANKA IN ODIS (INNINGS)

9 - VIRAT KOHLI (47)*
8 - SACHIN TENDULKAR (80)
7 - SANATH JAYASURIYA (85)
6 - GAUTAM GAMBHIR (36)
6 - ROHIT SHARMA (46)

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